

Resources:

- McDowell, Josh, and Sean McDowell. **More Than a Carpenter**. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2009.
- Strobel, Lee. **The Case for Christ**. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998.
- McDowell, Josh. **Evidence for Christianity**. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc, 2006.

Chapter 7: Who Would Die for a Lie?

The Transformation of Jesus' Apostles

Q. Can we trust the original oral and written testimonies about Jesus?

- Since the Christian faith is **historical**, our knowledge of it must rely heavily on testimony
- **All history** is essentially a knowledge of the past based on testimony
- So, can we trust that the testimony is reliable?
- All the apostles, except for John, died **martyrs'** deaths because they stood for two truths:
 - Christ's **deity**
 - Christ's **resurrection**
- These men were tortured and most finally suffered death by some of the cruelest methods:
 - Six were **crucified**
 - Four killed by the **sword, spear** or **arrows**
 - Only John died a natural **death**

Q. Many people have died for a lie. What do the apostles' deaths prove?

- Those that have died for a lie did so believing it was the **truth**
- If the resurrection had never happened, the **disciples** would have certainly known
- Therefore, they would have died for a lie while **knowing** it was a lie

How was the resurrection of Jesus different from the raising from the dead of several others in the New Testament?

Q. Why can we be sure that the disciples really believed what they were teaching?

- They were **eye-witnesses**
 - They stated this clearly in the NT gospels and letters
 - They stated that they were eye-witnesses of Jesus both before and **after** the resurrection
 - The central theme following the gospels is the **resurrection** of Christ
- They were unbelieving and had to be **convinced**
 - When Jesus was arrested most of the disciples **hid**
 - When Peter was asked if he knew Jesus, Peter **denied** Him
 - When they were told the tomb was empty, they first didn't **believe** it
 - When **Thomas** was told that the others had seen Jesus, he wanted to see for himself
 - **James**, brother of Jesus, was embarrassed and mocked Him
- They became **courageous** almost overnight
 - Once Thomas saw Jesus in the flesh, he believed and later died a martyr (by the spear)
 - Once Peter saw Jesus in the flesh, he believed and preached under the penalty of death in Jerusalem that Jesus was the Christ, later dying a martyr (crucified)
 - Once James saw Jesus in the flesh, he believed and preached in Jerusalem, later dying a martyr (stoned)
 - Once Jesus ascended to Heaven, the disciples **spread out** to preach among many nations and people
 - Even in the face of torture and death, the apostles never swayed from their **conviction** of the resurrection
- They preached in **Jerusalem**
- Their message was very **specific** and their conduct was **unanimous**
- Not even one **broke down** under the pressure
- There is no historical **testimony** against the resurrection of Christ
- Historians agree that Christianity **began** in Jerusalem

Since the first disciples believed only after seeing the risen Christ, why are we expected to believe without seeing Him?

Chapter 9: Did You Hear What Happened to Saul?

The Transformation of Saul of Tarsus

Q. What are some similarities and differences between Saul's conversion and the changes seen in the disciples?

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Q. What do we know of Saul before his conversion?

Who was he?

- He was born in **Tarsus**
- He was also a **Roman** citizen
- He was well-versed in Hellenistic (**Greek**) culture and philosophy
- He was well-educated in **Jewish** theology and culture and studied under the Pharisees
- He studied under Gamaliel, one of the great **rabbis** of that time

What did he believe?

- He was devoted to the Jewish **law**
- The offense he took to the Christian message was less about Jesus as **Messiah** and more about the view of the **law** as the way of salvation

Q. What do we know of Saul after his conversion?

What did he believe?

- He was a **witness** to the resurrected Christ
- He was **compelled** by God to preach the gospel

How did he change?

- His **character** was transformed
- His **relationship** with the followers of Jesus was transformed
- His **message** was transformed
- His **mission** was transformed
- He was imprisoned many times, tortured, and died a martyr for what he believed

Discussion: If we count Paul's conversion as being evidence for the truth of the Resurrection, shouldn't we then count Muhammed's conversion to Islam as being evidence for the truth that Jesus was not resurrected, since Muslim's deny the resurrection?

Q. What "alternatives" have been suggested for Saul's encounter and after-effects?

- That he suffered a **seizure** (based on *bright light, loss of normal bodily posture, message of strong religious content, and subsequent blindness*)
- That it was the result of a psychotic event or mood **disorder** (based on *the auditory and visual experiences*)
- That he witnessed a **fireball** passing through the Earth's atmosphere (based on *the bright light, being knocked off his feet, and subsequent blindness*)

Q. What do skeptics say about Paul?

- Many critics claim that Paul was not a true **apostle** of Jesus Christ.
 - Many Muslims assert that the **original** message of Jesus and his true followers was supposedly Islamic in teaching
 - They argue that Paul came in after the real Apostles and **corrupted** Christianity with new foreign teachings
 - *This may be the critic's way of reconciling the facts that the Quran affirms scripture yet also claiming that Christianity is false teaching*
 - Other critics, including Christians, claim that Paul teaches a different **gospel** than Jesus*
 - This is usually done by pointing out supposed **differences** in teachings
 - Jesus seems to focus more on the "**kingdom of Heaven**"
 - Paul seems to focus more on "**justification by faith**"
- The **Christian** position is that Paul was a true Apostle of Jesus Christ.
 - Historical evidence shows Paul was accepted by the original **apostles** and the earliest **Christians**
 - The **Bible** uniformly attests to Paul's acceptance as an Apostle
 - Paul's gospel in 1 Corinthians 15:1-8 is the **original** Gospel (Apostle's Creed)
 - The other Apostles **confirmed** what Paul was teaching (Galatians 2:1-9)
 - Other early **Christian** sources affirm Paul was an Apostle (Ignatius, Polycarp)